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## □ A legendary Australian winemaker is fighting to save his 180-year-old family farm with a crowdfunding campaign

A legendary Australian winemaker is fighting to save his 180-year-old family farm with a crowdfunding campaign : David Lowe is a legend of the Australian wine industry.

He honed his craft at Rothbury Estate in the Hunter Valley under two industry giants, Len Evans and Murray Tyrrell, in the 1980s, having begun his love affair with grapes when he planted his first vineyard on his family farm in Mudgee in mid-western New South Wales the mid-70s while still a boy.

But now Lowe is fighting to save his 35-year career and everything he worked for in the bitter fallout from a business relationship turned sour. His partner in Lowe Wines put both the winery and farmland in the hands of receivers last week. On Friday, Lowe was stood down, mid harvest, as winery manager, along with his adult son. Lowe's predecessors were graziers who settled in the Mudgee region in 1830s, naming the property 'Tinja'. The house dates from the 1880s. He is the sixth generation of Lowes to work this land, which is now organic and also home to The Zin House, a hatted restaurant run by his wife, chef Kim Currie.

But Currie, the feisty former director of Brand Orange and a champion of regional produce, who married Lowe last year, doesn't plan on surrendering without a fight. The couple have set up a GoFundMe page seeking \$500,000 by today, April 12.

The pair started out asking for \$1.5 million, but Currie says they've had so many private offers of support that they've reduced the target by two-thirds. So far they've raised just over \$35,000 in five days.

The GoFundMe page says: "A complicated set of legal circumstances has led to this. Securing this sought after financial support will secure retaining the farm, the winery and David and Kim's home."

Currie says that when the partner invested some years ago he took over existing bank loans, funded a divorce settlement and winery expansion in exchange for half the business and a mortgage over Lowe's land.

The chef says both Lowe Wines and The Zin House are successful businesses and banks were willing to lend the money they needed to buy back the land mortgaged to the business partner, who she declined to name. The deal is believed to be worth millions of dollars.

"Over time the relationship soured and the two agreed that David should buy him out," she recounted in a Facebook post.

"Meanwhile Lowe Wines and my own business on David's land became more and more successful."

The warring parties went to mediation over the sale of the land and struck a deal in December.

"Financing this was completely within our means and a number of institutions vied for our business," she said.

But separate to the land issue, the partners failed to reach an agreement to end the partnership and without that, the banks were unwilling to finance Lowe.

Last week his partner applied to resume the land and appointed receivers for the winery. Currie says she will lose The Zin House because it's on the Lowe land.

Currie says they're now seeking private loans or investors willing to back them if they can strike a deal with the winery's partner.

Business Insider has contacted receivers for both the land and winery but has not received a response.

David Lowe's award-winning career has earned accolades ranging from best Australian chardonnay to best zinfandel at the [International Wine Challenge](#). He was a pioneer of FIFO winemaking France's famed Bordeaux region, and worked as a wine show judge, as well as being vice-president of the Winemakers' Federation of Australia among numerous advisory roles.

NSW Agriculture gave him the sector's top award for services to the state's wine industry in 2013.

He told Business Insider he can't quite believe something so personal, beyond his career, is now at stake.

"It's ironic for me as a champion of family farm custodianship, to be fighting for my own. I always imagined I'd die here, where I was born and my ashes would be scattered with my parents and my sister," he said.

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Currie said the response since they launched the GoFundMe campaign and the community support in Mudgee had "been magnificent".

The chef says that whatever happens next, life will change dramatically for both Lowe and her, but she remains optimistic.

Unattributed

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